

Florida for 90 days at a time. Many of these individuals would like to spend more than 90 days in the U.S. but are scrupulous about not overstaying their visit. These foreign retirees leave the U.S. within 90 days, spend some time in their country and then come back to the United States for another 90 days. Many of these individuals may end up spending a large amount of time in the U.S. using the VWPP but they can do so only by constantly going back and forth from their country to the United States. Of course, foreign citizens also use the B-2 visitors visa to spend time for pleasure in the U.S. Again, the use of the B-2 visa requires the holder to return to their home after a relatively short period of time before coming back to the U.S.

The 4-year visa period proposed in the legislation is intended to reduce the need for foreign retirees to frequently travel back and forth from the U.S. to their home country in order to comply with U.S. immigration requirements. At the same time, a 4-year period would ensure that retirees making use of this visa do go home periodically to renew their status by demonstrating that they meet the requirements outlined in this proposal, such as residence in a foreign country which the alien has no intention of abandoning. The visa would be renewable as long as the application was filed from the retiree's country of citizenship.

Mr. Speaker, there are clearly important practical and policy distinctions between long-term nonimmigrants and permanent residents holding green cards. This legislation does not aim to change that. For example, an important distinction between these nonimmigrant foreign retirees and permanent residents is that the amount of time they spend in the United States would not accrue for naturalization purposes. Also, a green card confers important benefits on permanent residents, such as the ability to engage in employment or receive government aid, which would not be available to a nonimmigrant under this legislation. This bill would not provide work authorization or eligibility for any Federal means-tested programs. Instead, these nonimmigrants would be required to own a residence in the United States, maintain health coverage, and receive income at least twice the Federal poverty level.

In its simplest terms, this visa would serve as a much needed mechanism in which foreign retirees would have the opportunity to comfortably reside in the United States. Let me give you an example of how this will work by using August and Gerda Welz as an example. August and Gerda Welz have spent more than \$380,000 in the United States since taking up a residence in Palm Coast, Florida three years ago. Native Germans, the Welz's saw Florida as an ideal place to spend their retirement years, with its pleasant climate and sound economy. They own a home, pay taxes and volunteer in the community. Couples, such as the Welz's, represent the growing number of foreign retirees who wish to stay for an extended period of time in the United States.

Mr. Speaker, by simplifying the process for this unique group of retirees, this legislation would provide new and exciting opportunities for foreign retirees—a practice that would benefit all parties involved. There is no reason to discourage such individuals from spending some of their retirement years in the U.S., contributing to the economy and enhancing our communities.

I urge my colleagues to support this proposal.

## REFORMING PRESIDENTIAL DEBATES

**HON. BILL McCOLLUM**

OF FLORIDA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

*Wednesday, January 6, 1999*

Mr. McCOLLUM. Mr. Speaker, today I am introducing the Presidential Debate Reform Act. The situation surrounding the 1996 Presidential election has highlighted some flaws in our current method for selecting a President and Vice President of the United States of America. One critical flaw involves the way Presidential debates are scheduled.

My legislation would create the framework for deciding the participants and structure of Presidential debates. This framework would include a commission of three people nominated by the President. The President would nominate one person from a list submitted by the Republican National Committee, one person from a list submitted by the Democratic National Committee, and one person who is unaffiliated submitted jointly by the RNC and the DNC. These commissioners would then schedule several debates.

One such debate would be optional and include any Presidential candidate who is on the ballot in 50 states or polls at 5 percent in popular polls among likely voters. This could include major party candidates, although it would provide a forum for lesser known candidates to express their views.

The commission would then establish debates for Vice Presidential and Presidential candidates of the two major parties and anyone polling over 5 percent in polls taken after the optional debate. The penalty for a candidate choosing not to participate in the debates would be a reduction in the amount of Federal funds that candidate's party will receive to run the next convention. The reduction would be equal to the fraction of "mandatory" debates missed. I cannot imagine that a party would want to miss out on \$3 million, which is approximately the amount that would be lost by missing one debate, based on the cost of the 1996 conventions.

This has nothing to do with whether I think certain people should or should not participate in debates. However, I do believe that we need to have an established framework with defined ground rules to ensure fairness in the system.

Mr. Speaker, I believe this is a good bill and I look forward to pursuing this as the 2000 election heats up. I urge my colleagues to review this legislation and support its passage.

## F-1 STUDENT VISAS

**HON. BILL McCOLLUM**

OF FLORIDA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

*Wednesday, January 6, 1999*

Mr. McCOLLUM. Mr. Speaker, today I am introducing legislation to give American high schools the ability to welcome foreign exchange students into their schools without requiring them to charge tuition. I am pleased to

be joined by my colleagues, Mr. FRANK of Massachusetts and Mr. PICKETT of Virginia.

It was brought to my attention that individual schools which participate in informal programs to allow foreign exchange students to attend school in the U.S. are required to charge these same students tuition. The F-1 visa is for students who seek to enter the U.S. temporarily and solely to pursue a course of study. Under existing law, even if the school and the local school district do not want to charge the student for accepting an invitation to study in the U.S., the student will not be able to receive an F-1 visa without paying the fee. In some cases, the school, which otherwise would welcome a foreign exchange student, may be deterred from allowing them to attend due to the administrative burden of administering the fee. In other cases, American schools entering into informal sister-school exchanges with a foreign school may find that they are forced to charge the foreign student tuition while the American student is attending their sister-school for free.

This tuition requirement does not apply to foreign students who come to the U.S. to study in a program designated by the Director of the United States Information Agency (USIA). These students receive a J visa and are not required to reimburse the school for the cost of their attendance. On the other hand, foreign exchange students in the U.S. under an F-1 visa are usually attending school under informal arrangements, with a teacher or parent having invited them to spend time in the U.S. as a gesture of American hospitality and goodwill. Some schools participate in informal sister-school exchanges where one of their students will go abroad and the school in turn will sponsor a foreign student here. Although these are informal, flexible, private arrangements between schools and students that are not designated by the USIA, they are no less valuable in developing goodwill and greater understanding among people of different nations. In many cases, it simply does not make sense to charge tuition to foreign exchange students simply because they have an F-1 visa rather than a J visa.

The legislation I am introducing today will give schools the ability to have the Attorney General waive the F-1 visa tuition fee requirement. Schools that certify that the waiver will promote the educational interest of the local educational agency and will not impose an undue financial burden on the agency will be able to allow foreign exchange students to attend without charging a fee. On the other hand, schools that do not want to waive the fee will still be able to collect it. This legislation will simply give schools added flexibility to sponsor foreign exchange students without limiting the right of schools to collect needed fees. I urge all my colleagues to support this legislation.

## STATE OCCUPANCY STANDARDS AFFIRMATION ACT OF 1999

**HON. BILL McCOLLUM**

OF FLORIDA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

*Wednesday, January 6, 1999*

Mr. McCOLLUM. Mr. Speaker, today I am introducing legislation, the State Occupancy Standards Affirmation Act of 1999, declaring